

IMAGE READING APPARATUS

Background of the Invention

1. Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to an image reading apparatus for reading an original image, and particularly relates to an image reading apparatus that can read image while a reading optical member is moved relative to a fixedly placed original.

10 2. Description of Related Art

 Conventionally, a structure as shown in Fig. 4 has been widely used as an image reading apparatus for use in a copying machine or an image scanner or the like.

15 As shown in Fig. 4, a conventional image reading apparatus is provided with a platen glass 102 on which an original 101 to be read is to be placed, a white plate 103 used for shading compensation and a pressure plate 104 for pressing the original 101.

20 A lens unit 105 is provided for reduction-imaging reflection light from the original 101 that is illuminated with light, onto a CCD linear image sensor 106.

 A first mirror unit 110 is composed of an
25 original illumination lamp 111 in the form of a xenon lamp, a first reflection mirror 112 and an inverter 113 for turning the original illumination lamp 111 on.

A second mirror unit 120 is composed of a second reflection mirror 121 and a third reflection mirror 122.

With the above-described structure, the original 101 placed on the platen glass 102 is read while the first mirror unit 110 and the second mirror unit 120 are moved in a scanning manner in the sub-scanning direction (that is, in the right direction in Fig. 4) by a stepping motor 107.

A reader 130 is provided with an adjusting mechanism for adjusting various factors of a read image, such as geometrical characteristics, the magnification or the resolution. Optical adjustment is to be performed by operating this image adjusting mechanism.

As such an image adjusting mechanism, there has been used an adjusting mechanism that adjusts the positions of the second reflection mirror 121 and the third reflection mirror 122 in the second mirror unit 120 along the direction indicated by arrow a in Fig. 4. This type of mechanism is disclosed in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2001-222075.

In the following, this adjusting mechanism will be described with reference to Figs. 5 and 6. Each of Figs. 5 and 6 includes a plan view, front view, a left side view and a right side view.

Referring to Fig. 5, a second mirror frame 201

is a frame for supporting the second reflection mirror 121 and the third reflection mirror 122. The second mirror frame 201 has sliders 204 and 205 and sliders 206 and 207 provided at positions to be in
5 slidable contact with a front optical rail 251 and a rear optical rail 252 respectively. The front optical rail 251 and the rear optical rail 252 constitute a scanning plane of the second mirror unit 120a.

10 The sliders 204 and 205 on one side are fixedly supported on a front slider frame 202. The sliders 206 and 207 on the other side are fixedly supported on a rear slider frame 203.

15 The front slider frame 202 is fixed by a screw 208 so that the position of the front slider frame 202 can be adjusted along the direction indicated by arrow b relative to the second mirror frame 201. A screw 209 is provided in the same manner.

20 In the above-described structure, the position of the front slider frame 202 relative to the second mirror frame 201 is adjusted based on geometrical characteristics of the image in order to adjust the inclination of the second reflection mirror 121 and the third reflection mirror 122 with respect to the
25 thrust direction.

 The rear slider frame 203 is supported and fixed on the second mirror frame 201. The rear

slider frame 203 is constructed in such a way that its rotational position about a shaft 210 provided on the second mirror frame can be adjusted.

The position of the rear slider frame 203
5 relative to the second mirror frame 201 is adjusted in order to enhance the coplanarity of the sliders 204, 205, 206 and 207.

As shown in Fig. 6, a structure in which a second mirror frame 301 is secured to a front side
10 plate 302 and a rear side plate 303 by means of screws or the like may also be adopted.

In this structure, the second reflection mirror 121 and the third reflection mirror 122 are supported on the second mirror frame 301. The second mirror
15 frame 301 has sliders 304 and 305 and sliders 306 and 307 provided at positions to be in slidable contact with a front optical rail 351 and a rear optical rail 352 respectively. The front optical rail 351 and the rear optical rail 352 constitute a scanning plane of
20 the second mirror unit 120b.

Details of the sliders 304 and 305 will be described with reference to Figs. 7A and 7B. Fig. 7B is an enlarged partial view showing a part of Fig. 7A.

As shown in Fig. 7A, the slider 304 is provided
25 with a sliding portion 304a for sliding in contact with the front optical rail 351 and a screw portion 304b provided perpendicularly to the optical rail

surface.

The slider 305 has the same structure as the slider 304, namely, the slider 305 is provided with a sliding portion 305a for sliding in contact with the rear optical rail 352 and a screw portion 305b provided perpendicularly to the optical surface.

Fig. 7B is an enlarged view showing the screw portion 304b or 305b. As shown in Fig. 7B, screw hole portions 301a for engaging with the aforementioned screw portions 304b and 305b are formed on the second mirror frame 301.

Furthermore, as shown in Fig. 7B, a recessed portion 304c or 305c for engagement with an adjusting tool 361 is provided on each of the sliders 304 and 305. With this structure, the sliders 304 and 305 are rotated in the direction parallel to the surface of the front optical rail 351 and the surface of the rear optical rail 352 respectively by means of the adjusting tool 361 engaging with the recessed portions 304c and 305c, so that the positions of the sliders 304 and 305 in the direction indicated by arrow b in Fig. 7A can be adjusted relative to the second mirror frame 301.

The positions of the sliders 304 and 305 are adjusted based on geometrical characteristics of the image in order to adjust the inclination of the second reflection mirror 121 and the third reflection

mirror 122 with respect to the thrust direction. In addition, they are adjusted in order to enhance the coplanarity of the sliders 304 to 307.

5 The sliders 304 and 305 that have been adjusted in their positions are fixed to the second mirror frame 301 by adhesive 371 so that the position of the sliders 304 and 305 will not be changed by scanning operation of the second mirror unit 120b.

10 However, the above-described prior art mechanism for adjusting the inclination of the second mirror 121 and the third mirror 122 and for adjusting the coplanarity of the sliders suffers from the following problems.

15 As shown in Fig. 5, it is necessary for that prior art that the second mirror frame 201 for supporting the second reflection mirror 121 and the third reflection mirror 122, the front slider frame 202 and the rear slider frame 202 for supporting the sliders 204 to 207 be constituted as separate members.
20 This results in an increase in the number of parts, which causes an increase in cost.

25 Furthermore, it is necessary for the structure to allow driver access for adjusting the inclination and the coplanarity in the direction toward the side surface of the second mirror unit 120. However, an frame (not shown) of the image reading apparatus is generally present at a position near the side of the

second mirror unit 120a, and therefore, the operationality is very low.

On the other hand, the prior art shown in Fig. 6 does not suffer from the above-described problem.

5 However, another problem arises in connection with the prior art shown in Fig. 6, that is, looseness of the sliders 304 and 305 on the second mirror frame 301 generated by the scanning operation of the second mirror unit 120b.

10 Recently, with an increase in the speed of the mirror unit, a materials having high sliding ability such as a polyolefin is used as the material of the sliders 304 to 307. Therefore, the adhesion force of the adhesive is made worse to a considerable degree,
15 and the sliders 304 and 305 are easy to be loosened.

Such looseness of the sliders 304 and 305 causes inclination of the second reflection mirror 121 and the third reflection mirror 122, which, in turn, causes deterioration of geometric
20 characteristics of read images.

One may consider to adhere the sliders 304 and 305 with an adhesive having a strong adhesion force. However, in the case that such an adhesive is used, adjustment of the height of the sliders 304 and 305
25 becomes impossible in the market, in spite that such adjustment is necessary for correcting geometrical characteristics of the image. Consequently, it is

very difficult to adopt adhesion of the sliders 304 and 305 using an adhesive having a strong adhesion force.

In addition, in the sliders 304 and 305 and the
5 second mirror frame 301 according to the prior art shown in Fig. 6, there is play in the mount portion of the sliders 304 and 305 to the second mirror frame 301 due to small play or backlash generated between the aforementioned screw portions 304b and 305b and
10 the screw hole portions 301a, even when the adhesion force of the adhesive 371 to the sliders 304 and 305 is strong.

Due to the play in the mount portion of the sliders 304 and 305 to the second mirror frame 301,
15 vibration will be generated upon the scanning operation of the second mirror unit 120b. As a result, for example, displacement in the image position upon reading a monochrome image or misregistration of colors in the case of a color
20 scanner can be caused.

As per the above, in image reading apparatus such as scanners, positional displacement of images or misregistration of colors are generated due to looseness of slider members for performing position
25 adjustment or play in the mount portion of the slider members, so that there arise problems concerning reliability and stability of the image reading

apparatus. Therefore, it is desired to prevent the looseness in slider members such as the sliders 304 and 305 and play in the mount portion of the slider members.

5 Summary of the Invention

 An object of the present invention is to provide an image reading apparatus in which play and looseness of a slider of a moving optical member are eliminated.

10 Another object of the present invention is to provided an image reading apparatus in which the position of a moving optical member in the height direction can be easily adjusted.

 Still another object of the present invention
15 is to provide an image reading apparatus comprising:
 an original placement portion on which an original is to be placed;

 optical means for optically scanning the original on the original placement portion while
20 moving relative to the original placement portion;
 and

 a guide member that guides movement of the optical means;

 wherein the optical means includes a sliding
25 member having a screw portion that slides in contact with the guide member and a screw hole portion to which the sliding member is mounted, the screw

portion of the sliding member being plastically deformable and screwed into the screw hole portion while being plastically deformed.

Other objects and features of the present invention will become apparent from the following description.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a cross sectional view schematically showing an image reading apparatus using slider portions according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2A is a cross sectional view showing a slider portion to be used in the image reading apparatus according to the embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2B is a cross sectional view showing the slider portion to be used in the image reading apparatus according to the embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2C is a side view showing the slider portion to be used in the image reading apparatus according to the embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 3 is an enlarged cross sectional view showing another slider portion to be used in the image reading apparatus according to the embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 4 schematically shows an image reading

apparatus.

Fig. 5 includes a front view, a plan view, a right side view and left side view showing an example of a slider of an image reading apparatus.

5 Fig. 6 includes a front view, a plan view, a right side view and left side view showing an example of a slider of an image reading apparatus.

Fig. 7A is a side view illustrating a problem concerning a slider portion used in an image forming
10 apparatus.

Fig. 7B is an enlarged cross sectional view for illustrating the problem concerning the slider portion used in an image reading apparatus.

Description of the Preferred Embodiment

15 In the following, an embodiment of the present invention will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

In the drawings, the same parts are designated with the same reference signs and redundant
20 description thereof will be omitted.

(Image Reading Apparatus)

First, an image reading apparatus according to an embodiment of the present invention will be described. Fig. 1 is a cross sectional view
25 schematically showing the image reading apparatus.

As shown in Fig. 1, the image reading apparatus according to this embodiment is provided with a

platen glass 2 serving as original placement means on which an original 1 to be read is to be placed, a white plate 3 used for shading compensation and a pressure plate 4 for pressing the original 1. In the
5 interior of the image reading apparatus according to the embodiment, there is provided a lens unit 5, a CCD linear image sensor 6, a stepping motor 7, a first mirror unit 8 serving as first scanning means and a second mirror unit 9 serving as second scanning
10 means.

The lens unit 5 is provided for reduction-imaging reflection light from the original 1 that is illuminated with light, onto the CCD linear image sensor 6.

15 The first mirror unit 8 is composed of an original illumination lamp 11 in the form of a xenon lamp, a first reflection mirror 12 serving as a first reflection system and an inverter 13 for turning the original illumination lamp 11 on. The second mirror
20 unit 9 is composed of a second reflection mirror 14 serving as a second reflection system and a third reflection mirror 15 serving as a third reflection system.

With the above-described structure, the
25 original 1 placed on the platen glass 2 is read while the first mirror unit 8 and the second mirror unit 9 are moved in a scanning manner in the sub-scanning

direction (that is, in the right direction in Fig. 1) by a stepping motor 7.

A reader 30 is provided with an adjusting mechanism for adjusting various factors of a read
5 image, such as geometrical characteristics, the magnification or the resolution. Optical adjustment is to be performed by operating this image adjusting mechanism.

(Structure of Slider Member)

10 Slider members used in the image reading apparatus according to the embodiment that has the above-described structure will be described in the following. Figs. 2A, 2B, 2C and 3 show a slider member according to this embodiment. In addition,
15 the description will be made with additional reference to Figs. 6 and 7 as the need arises. In those drawings, description of portions in the structure that are the same as those in the prior art will be omitted.

20 Fig. 2A shows a screw portion 304b or 305b of the slider 304 or 305. Fig. 2B is a cross sectional view in the axial direction of the screw portion 304b or 305b of the slider 304 or 305. Fig. 2B is a cross sectional view taken on the plane orthogonal to the
25 axial direction.

As shown in Fig. 2B, on the root portion of the thread of the screw portion (i.e. the threaded

portion) 304b (305b) of the slider 304 (305), there is provided four projected portions 304d (305d) along the circumference. Each of the projected portions 304d (305d) has a convex shape extending from the
5 root of the screw thread up to the major diameter of the screw. Each of the projected portion 304d (305d) has tapered portions 305e and 305f in the circumferential direction.

The projected portions 304d (305d) are provided
10 in the range along the axial direction of the screw portion 304b (305b) indicated by double-sided arrow X. In other words, the projected portions 304d (305d) are provided in the area other than the tip end area of the screw portions 304b (305b), and they are not
15 provided in the tip end area of the screw portion 304b (305b) indicated by arrow Y above arrow X.

When the slider 304 (305) is screwed into the second mirror frame 301 shown in Fig. 6, the projected portions 304d (305d) of the slider 304
20 (305) are threaded into the screw hole portion 301a of the second mirror frame while being plastically deformed.

In this way, the slider 304 (305) is screwed into the screw hole portion 301a of the second mirror
25 frame 301 with the projected portions 304d (305d) being in plastically deformed states. With this feature, the loosening torque of the slider 304 (305)

in relation to the second mirror frame 301 is increased. Consequently, loosening of the sliders 304 and 305 from the second mirror frame 301 due to the scanning operation of the second mirror unit 120b
5 can be avoided.

The projected portions 304d (305d) of the slider 304 (305) are not provided in the tip end area (i.e. the area along the axial direction indicated by arrow Y) of the screw portion 304b (305b).
10 Consequently, it is easy to commence screwing of the sliders 304 and 305 into the second mirror frame 301.

In addition, the projected portions 304d (305d) are plastically deformed by the screw hole portion 301a of the second mirror frame 301 while guided by
15 the tapered portions 305e and 305f of the projected portions 304d (305d). Therefore, an increase in the screw torque is small, so that it is possible to prevent problems that might occur upon assembling, such as increase in the screw torque or sticking of
20 the sliders 304 and 305 to the second mirror frame as a result of bending of the sliders 304 and 305 from occurring.

In the above-described sliders 304 and 305 and the second mirror frame 301, play in the mount
25 portion between the aforementioned screw portion 304b (305b) and the screw hole portion 301a is absorbed by the plastic deformation of the projected portions

304d (305d). Consequently, play in the mount portion can be eliminated, and vibration of the second mirror unit 120b during the scanning operation can be prevented from occurring.

5 In this embodiment, the plastic deformation of the projected portions 304d (305d) of the slider 304 (305) is intended to increase the loosening torque of the slider 304 (305) from the second mirror frame 301.

 However, a similar effect can be attained by
10 designing the shape of the thread of the screw portion 304b (305b) of the slider 304 (305) as an expanded shape as compared to the shape of the internal thread of the screw hole portion 301a of the second mirror frame 301 so that they will overlap
15 (interfere) with each other.

 As per the above, in the image reading apparatus according to the embodiment of the present invention, the slider 304 (305) is screwed into the screw hole portion 301a of the second mirror frame
20 301 with the projected portions 304d (305d) being in plastically deformed states. With this feature, the loosening torque of the slider 304 (305) in relation to the second mirror frame 301 is increased. Consequently, loosening of the sliders 304 and 305
25 from the second mirror frame 301 due to the scanning operation of the second mirror unit 120b can be avoided.

Consequently, inclination of the second reflection mirror 121 and the third reflection mirror 122 caused by loosening of the sliders 304 and 305 can be prevented from occurring, and therefore,
5 deterioration of geometrical characteristics of read images can be avoided.

In addition, in the sliders 304 and 305 and the second mirror frame 301 of the image reading apparatus according to this embodiment, play in the
10 mount portion of the screw portions 304b and 305b to the screw hole portions 301a can be suppressed by virtue of plastic deformation of the projected portions 304d and 305d.

Consequently, it is possible to prevent
15 vibration of the second mirror unit 120b upon the scanning operation, and therefore it is possible to avoid deteriorations of so-called read image characteristics such as positional displacement of images and misregistration of colors in the case that
20 multiple colors are read.

While one embodiment of the present invention has been described in the foregoing, the present invention is not limited to the above-described embodiment but various modification can be made based
25 on the technical concept of the present invention.

For example, the materials and the structures of the image reading apparatus that have been

described in connection with the embodiment are mere examples, and therefore different materials and structures of the image reading apparatus may be adopted in accordance with requirements.

5 For example, while the above description of the embodiment has been directed to the sliders of the second mirror unit 120b, the structure same as the structure of this embodiment may be applied to the sliders of the first mirror unit 110 serving as the
10 first scanning means. In this case also, the same advantageous effects can be attained.

 Furthermore, while in the above-described embodiment, the overlapping screw portions 304 and 305 have the shape shown in Figs. 2 and 3, the
15 overlapping screw portions 304b and 305b of the sliders 304 and 305 having other shapes than those shown in Figs. 2 and 3 can attain the same advantageous effects so long as the screw portions 304b and 305b of the sliders 304 and 305 overlap with
20 the screw hole portions 301 of the second mirror frame 301.

 As per the above, according to the image reading apparatus according to the present invention, it is possible to avoid loosening and play in
25 mounting of sliders that can be adjusted in their positions while allowing easy adjustment of inclination and easy adjustment of coplanarity.

Consequently, it is possible to avoid deterioration of geometrical characteristics or deterioration of image characteristics of read images such as positional displacement of images or misregistration of colors in the case of color images.

While an embodiment of the present invention has been described in the foregoing, it will be understood that the present invention is not restricted to specific features of the embodiment, but various modification can be made without departing from the scope and spirit of the present invention.